

## **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY #5**

### **FOCUS ON: CREATING A YESTERYEAR NEWSPAPER**

Students work as a group to create a "**Yesteryear Newspaper**". Focusing on one of the historical periods of the "Discover Presidential Log Cabins" program, each group will produce one-page of a newspaper from that era. The team will research, write, design, and present their yesteryear newspaper to the class.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Select one of the three historic log cabin restoration sites: Valley Forge, PA, City Point, VA, or Medora, ND.
2. Prepare a one-page fact sheet (from the information and additional resources listed in this guide) about that site and its historic time period.
3. Gather samples of newspapers, graphics and images on that time period (i.e., the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, late 19<sup>th</sup> century). Use these as examples to share with your class.
4. Divide your class into groups of four or five.
5. Distribute a copy of a current newspaper. Have them review the layout of the newspaper. Discuss with them the name of the paper. Ask them why they think that name was chosen for the paper. Explain the purpose of the headline and how more important stories generally get larger headlines. Then distribute to each group member a copy of the fact sheet for the historic site you have selected.
6. Have each member of the group select one topic from the fact sheet to focus their article on (i.e., the food shortages at Valley Forge; the weather during the winter of 1777; and the log huts the Continental Army built).
7. Have each group name their yesteryear newspaper.
8. Have each group member research and write a brief article on their selected topic for their group's newspaper. Each article should contain a headline and should be written as though the writer was a reporter during the time period of the topic. Articles should be no more than one page long. Provide each group with copies of graphic images from that time period. You may also assign each "reporter" the task of finding additional graphic images that they wish to use with their article (i.e., via Internet research, photocopies of photos and images from books or articles, etc.).
9. During a subsequent class period, have each group complete the layout for their newspaper. If you have access to a computer program such as "The Newsroom" you can utilize the student created articles in that format. If not, provide each group with scissors, tape, rubber cement, and large sheets of newsprint to layout their newspaper page.

Display each of the yesteryear newspapers in your classroom. Have each group read the articles they feel are their group's best or most creative to the class.

# The Picket Post

## News from Valley Forge

### Winter/Spring Edition, 1777-1778

#### Baron Von Steuben to Train Continental Army

The recent arrival of Baron Friedrich Wilhelm Augustus Henry Ferdinand von Steuben at Valley Forge has the whole camp abuzz. Congress has appointed this veteran of Frederick the Great's army to the post of Inspector General. He has been assigned the rather large task of standardizing the training of the American army. As he speaks no English this exercise should really be interesting! The word is that he has some people with him who can translate his meaning so all is not lost. Perhaps some of the "Germans" in General Muhlenberg's regiment may agree to help out. Rumor has it that the Baron has already learned one word of English since his arrival at the encampment; however, delicacy does not permit us to print that word here.



von Steuben



Horatio Gates

#### Weather Forecast

(For those who believe in such things.) Here is the weather forecast for the region of Valley Forge and near-by vicinities: The recent spate of blustery weather will continue. Snow is not in the forecast for the next few days, rather our prognosticators at headquarters (John Laurens and Alexander Hamilton) are calling for freezing rain and sleet. This will be followed by periods of low cloud and fog intermixed with drizzle. Attempts to dissipate the cloud cover with cannon fire from General Knox's batteries have been futile and are to be discontinued.

#### General Gates Eyes Top Post!

General Horatio Gates of the northern wing of the Continental Army has been recently implicated in a plot to oust our beloved General Washington from command. Sources within the camp at Valley Forge, PA, tell this reporter that Gates has some support for this move in Congress. The name of General Thomas Conway has come up continually as one of those who has been "bad-mouthing" Washington's every decision. Conway was unavailable for comment.

#### Washington is Cautiously Optimistic



(Valley Forge, PA) In a recent exclusive interview granted to the *Picket Post*, General George Washington expressed cautious optimism as to the fortunes of the army and the cause of American Independence. We asked the General what gives

him hope that the current situation can be turned around. He replied, "If General von Steuben can whip the army into shape and Dr. Franklin makes good on his efforts to bring the French into our camp, I have every confidence that the American soldier will do his part and secure for us the major victory that I seek. All of this I see in spite of the rather wretched conditions with regard to food and equippage. Thirteen different types of muskets...I mean really!"

The *Picket Post* asked the General if the recent Conway-Gates affair would have any effect on staffing. In a rare unguarded moment the General seemed on the verge of filling the air with blue language as he said, "By the Eternal! Can't I go one day without hearing about Conway? The man has left the camp and the army. Let no more be said about it. Congress has appointed von Steuben to fill the post of Inspector General that Conway declined to keep."